The 2023 Culture of Care Award goes to the Animal Caretaker Team from the Department of Biomedicine Mattenhofstrasse, University of Basel, in recognition of their exemplary approach to sustainably reduce surplus animals. They received the award at the Swiss Laboratory Animal Science Association (SGV) Annual Meeting in Zürich on November 28th.

Zürich 28 11 2023

Reducing the number of animals that are bred but have no further use should be self-evident from an ethical point of view. However, a reduction to the indispensable minimum is still a major challenge for many scientific institutions. The reasons and potential approaches are complex and include among others the necessity to breed specific genotypes, the training of those responsible for breeding, the need of central management of breeding to ensure optimised breeding schemes, the exchange of animals between research groups and cryopreservation of lines instead of maintenance breeding.

Through personal commitment, perseverance and expertise of the awarded caretaker team, surplus animals could be significantly reduced in their animal facility and a sustainable concept for needs-based breeding could be implemented. Through the course of an organised seminar series, animal-based experiments were explained to animal care staff in order to improve their understanding of the use of the bred animals. In this way, workplace satisfaction could be increased and at the same time the psychological stress caused by killing of surplus animals could be reduced.

The reduction of animals killed, addresses both animal welfare concerns and a reduction of psychological stress and therefore prevents also compassion fatigue of animal care personnel in lab animal husbandry.
Due to the cooperative, positive and proactive approach of the team, the initiative has led to a sustainable and ongoing reduction of surplus animals at the local facility:

- The number of surplus animals was reduced by between 35 and 50%, depending on the genetically modified line
- For the year 2022, about 23'800 animals have been counted in the annual report of this animal facility, while for the first half of 2023, only about 8'000 animals have been recorded so far

The Culture of Care (CoC) Award recognizes an individual or a group of people for their accomplishment to promote and implement a good Culture of Care within a research institution that uses animals for research. The winning selection is awarded with a cash prize of CHF 3000.-, a trophy, the opportunity to present their activities at a relevant Conference, and the creation of a short interview film on the topic.
About Us

The Swiss 3R Competence Centre (3RCC), a nonprofit association located in Bern, promotes research, education and communication for the replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experimentation (3Rs principle). The 3RCC is a joint initiative of academia, the industry, regulators, the government and animal welfare associations. Its partners include 11 universities and higher education institutions represented by their umbrella organisation swissuniversities, the Swiss association of the pharmaceutical industry (Interpharma), the Swiss Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) and Swiss Animal Protection (SAP).

The 3RCC is a scientific centre of national importance working on a non-commercial basis according to article 15 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA), and benefits from the support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). SERI as well as the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) are observer members of the 3RCC association.